



Toldos: Reflections from a Broken Heart

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November 21, 2014

It has been a heartbreaking week. The barbaric murder of Rabbi Moshe Twersky, R' Kalman Levine, R' Avraham Moshe Goldberg and R' Ari Kupinsky as they prayed together is something that defies comprehension. Moments that should have been filled with serenity and heartfelt dialogue with the Divine were shattered by terrorists' knives and guns. They are holy and special souls who leave behind wives, children and grandchildren. Zidan Sayif, the righteous and brave, Druze police officer, who ran into the line of fire, gave his life for us. Zidan leaves behind a young child and a pregnant wife. And there are the survivors, some of whom made it out intact and others who hover between life and death. What words can we find to soothe the searing pain of our broken heart? We don't understand the ways of God and yet we acknowledge that all comes from Him. We cannot comprehend how such an event could occur, yet, as a nation we recite the words of *Tzidduk HaDin* (acceptance of Divine judgment), *Hashem nasan, V'Hashem lakach, yihi shem Hashem mevorach; God has given, God has taken, the name of the Lord shall be blessed.*

Let us draw strength from the words of King David. Dovid HaMelech writes in Psalms (32:6):

וְעַל־זֹאת תִּפְלֹל כָּל־חַסִּיד | אֲלֵיךָ לַעֲת מְצָא וְקִי לְשֹׁטֵף מַיִם רַבִּים אֲלֵיו לֹא יָגִיעוּ:

6. For this let every pious man pray to You, at a time when You may be found; indeed, the flood of many waters will not reach him.

Throughout this Psalm, King David speaks of the restorative power of *Teshuva*, *repentance*. In this verse Dovid focuses on the need to take advantage of those moments when God is close and more "accessible." Although we always have the ability to connect and dialogue, there are times when God is more receptive to our overtures (e.g. the month of Elul and the Ten Days of Repentance). Man must be aware of these moments and do his best to maximize them.

Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsh understands this verse differently. Rav Hirsch begins by focusing on the word "*Yispalel*." We often translate this word as pray. However, the root "*palal*" means to engage in the process of self-judgment and introspection. As such "*Yispalel*" does not simply mean to pray but rather to engage in the process of self-judgment and personal introspection. Furthermore, "*flood waters*" is a metaphor for suffering and difficulties which threaten to overtake and drown the individual. Rav Hirsch posits that King David is not teaching us about repentance, rather about how to handle suffering and challenge.

Al Zos Yispalel Kol Chossid L'Es M'Tzo - *For this, when suffering and challenge is visited upon the pious one, he will reflect and introspect. Let such a man, whenever he senses that suffering is about to descend upon him, take the opportunity thus afforded him to evaluate himself. Let him strive to acquire the proper insight concerning himself, his past, his present, and the achievements which the Lord will expect of his in the future.*

Rak L'Shetef Mayim Rabbim Elav Lo Ya'giu - *indeed, the flood waters will not reach him. The mighty flood of suffering will not overpower the individual who chooses to use his suffering as a catalyst for introspection and the need for greater life meaning.*

Rav Hirsch teaches us an incredible idea. There are times when the pain and suffering is so acute that we fear it will overtake us. There is sadness that is so heavy that it blankets us with a veil of darkness. It is during these moments that we must find a way to grow. We must find a way to use these events to make us stronger. We must look within and figure out how to amplify our personal spirituality, we must introspect and take stock of our lives, and we must judge ourselves and see if we are actualizing our potential. It is easy to be overtaken by despair but *Dovid HaMelech* teaches us that if we use the difficult moments of life as catalysts for personal growth, we control the sadness, we can tame the waters.



On Thursday evening, I received the following request:

Request from the Devastated Widows and their Bereaved Families

Our hearts are broken and melting amidst tears over the spilling of the blood of the martyred heads of our families - may God avenge their death. We turn to you, our fellow Jewish brethren wherever you may be! Let us all unite in order that we receive Hashem's mercy. Let us take upon ourselves to increase love and brotherhood between people, communities, and diverse groups.

We implore each person to take upon himself at the onset of Shabbat, to sanctify this Holy Shabbat, Parshat Toldot (the eve of the Rosh Chodesh Kislev), to make this Shabbat a day of unconditional love - a day of refraining from divisiveness and arguments, gossip and tale-bearing.

This act will bring about a great elevation of our husbands' souls, slaughtered in sanctification of God's Name, may He be blessed.

May Hashem look down from above, see our suffering, wipe away our tears and say "Enough!" to our troubles. May we be worthy to witness the coming of the Messiah very soon - amen, amen!

*Mrs. Chaya Levin and family, Mrs. Bryna Goldberg and family, Mrs. Yaacova Kupensky and family,
Mrs. Bashy Twersky and family*

The bereaved families are asking us to use their pain as a catalyst for our growth. Let us come closer to one another, let us come closer to ourselves, and let us grow.

On this Shabbos and in the days ahead, as we wade through the river of tears, let us find the courage to become more.